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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 007927

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#) [KINR](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ ROUNDUP: NEW IRAQI AMBASSADOR AND FORMER
JORDAN AMB TO IRAQ COMMENT ON SITUATION IN IRAQ

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Newly-arrived Iraqi Ambassador to Jordan Ata Abdul Wahab's primary mission is to change the distorted picture many Jordanians have of developments in Iraq. Abdul Wahab last served in the Iraqi government as King Faisal II's private secretary in 1958. Separately, former Jordan Ambassador to Iraq and retired JAF Major General Hmood Qatarneh urged privately that the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) and U.S. bring former Iraqi military leaders into the political process. End Summary.

NEW IRAQI AMBASSADOR TO JORDAN

2. (C) In a September 19 introductory call with CDA, new Iraqi Ambassador Ata Abdul Wahab described his primary mission as changing the distorted picture many Jordanians have of developments in Iraq, and in particular the equation of the Iraqi "resistance" with Palestinians fighting against Israeli occupation. Abdul Wahab agreed that Iraq and the U.S. needed to work in parallel ways -- though not visibly in coordination -- and he welcomed the idea of exchanging ideas with post's PA section. Abdul Wahab praised the strong Jordan-Iraq government relationship, and the Iraqi police training program in Jordan. Abdul Wahab said Iraq was enthusiastic about a proposal to work with Jordan to improve the transportation infrastructure from Aqaba to the border and into Iraq. He said the financing details needed development, but in principle it was a good proposal and would be discussed by a joint Iraq-Jordan higher committee at the end of the month. As for the Iraqi Embassy in Amman, he said his biggest problem was staffing shortages, but claimed the MFA in Iraq is helpful in identifying new personnel.

FORMER JORDAN AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ

3. (C) In a September 16 meeting with PolOff and post's Iraq Policy Coordinator, former Jordan Ambassador to Iraq and retired JAF Major General Hmood Qatarneh urged the IIG and U.S. to exert greater effort to bring some former senior Iraqi military leaders and Ba'ath party figures into the political process. He claimed many of these Iraqi leaders, including some former Republican Guard commanders, personally hated Saddam and did not support his policies, although they were obliged to give public support. He asserted some had widespread respect and substantial followings, and that many were convinced secular nationalists, opposed to extremism and resistant to Iranian/Syrian influence. Bringing such people into the fold, he claimed, would help the security situation as many of those military leaders removed after the liberation could immediately step in and provide leadership and support for the IIG. He based this view on his term as Ambassador in Iraq from 1997 to 2000, asserting most of the Iraqi military leadership despised the Saddam Hussein regime despite maintaining membership in the Ba'ath party.

4. (C) Qatarneh also stressed the importance of reaching out (through intermediaries if necessary) and identifying and cultivating home grown leadership figures. There are two or three in every community. He criticized a perceived predominance of former Iraqi exiles and the current make-up of the IIG.

BIO NOTES

5. (C) Ata Abdul Wahab was an Iraqi Foreign Service officer in the early 50s, serving in Beirut and later becoming King Faisal II's private secretary. After the 1958 coup he was dismissed from the government and went into a private reinsurance business in Baghdad. He moved to Kuwait to work for Lloyds in 1969, but says that shortly afterward he was kidnapped by Iraqi agents and smuggled back to Baghdad, where he was brutally tortured and sentenced to death on manufactured charges of espionage on behalf of Israel. Abdul Wahab said at that time Saddam was trying to consolidate power through terror, and the arrest of a number of known "names" from previous regimes was effective in spreading fear. His sentence was later commuted to a life term; later, having served his purpose, he was released in 1982 but not

permitted to leave Iraq. He fled to Jordan in 1992 and kept a low profile, supporting himself in translating literary works from English to Arabic (a practice he had begun while in prison, to keep his mind active). He has translated the works of William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf, for example. His memoirs, in Arabic, are due for publication shortly.

16. (C) Hmood Qatarneh is a Sunni Muslim. He retired from the JAF as a Major General in 1997, and shortly after became Jordan Ambassador to Iraq. Proud of his military service, he said he had trained in the U.S. at Ft. Benning and Ft. Knox on several occasions. He praised the training he received at the Infantry Officer Advanced Course (now called the Captain's Course) at Ft. Benning as the best in his career. A career armor officer, he last served the JAF as commander of the 5th Armor Division, a position he held for five years. Qatarneh served as Jordan's Ambassador to Iraq from 1997 to 2000 and has not visited Iraq since. Although criticized by a former Foreign Minister of Jordan for being too close to Iraqis, Qatarneh is proud of his success at establishing what he regarded as trustworthy relationships with prominent regime officials below the immediate circle of Saddam cronies. He is now General Manager of Alsham Palace Trading Establishment, an import and export business.

17. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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HALE